Who's Holding Up Welfare Reform?

by Phyllis Schlafly *July 13, 1995*

Earlier this spring, the House passed a pretty good welfare reform bill, due largely to the perseverance of Rep. Jim Talent (R-MO). The Senate Finance Committee, however, has just watered down the reforms in the bill and downgraded its reference to marnage.

The Senate version is such a betrayal of the real welfare reform we had hoped for that Senator Lauch Faircloth (R-NC) has threatened to filibuster it. Senator Phil Gramm (R-TX) says it "does not deserve the name welfare reform."

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's chief of staff, Sheila Burke, is responsible for gutting the bill of its real reform requirements. She even objected to the House bill's language that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society."

Why would anybody object to that statement, especially when illegitimacy is the biggest problem with the welfare system? The answer is simple if you understand the feminists' antagonism toward marriage.

The primer of feminist ideology taught in "women's studies" courses in colleges is Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex,* in which she calls marriage "an obscene bourgeois institution." For the last 20 years, the feminist agenda has sought to "liberate" women from home, husband, family and children on the premise that marriage makes women "second-class citizens" and that the lot of a wife is that of a servant.

Now-Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg wrote in her 1977 book "Sex Bias in the U.S. Code" that the breadwinning-husband homemaking-wife concept "must be eliminated" from the law. In 1980, Gloria Steinem bragged that she persuaded President Jimmy Carter to use the name "White House Conference on Families" (in the plural) to promote the notion that all living arrangements are as valid as the nuclear family.

This sort of feminist ideology is dominant in the Bill and Hillary Clinton Administration. Now it has surfaced in the new Republican Senate in the person of Sheila Burke, whom insiders call "the second most powerful woman in Washington."

Her enormous influence is one of the most underreported news stories in the nation's capital. Last year, Sheila Burke worked down to the last weeks of Congress to try to produce a Clinton-Dole compromise health care bill (which conservatives dubbed "Hillary Lite"). Some thought her goal was a seat on the Clinton-appointed National Health Board.

Conservatives fear the liberal/feminist influence Sheila Burke would have in any future Dole Administration. In the meantime, her work to eliminate pro-marriage, anti illegitimacy language and provisions threatens the entire concept of welfare reform.

Welfare reform is the real test of whether or not Bob Dole would ever change status-quo, business-as-usual Big Government. The American people want to end welfare as an entitlement and abolish welfare as we know it.

Nobody should be "entitled" to pick the pockets of taxpayers. Recipients of charity should receive only what the donor is willing and able to give. The amount of charity should be determined by the amount of funds available, not by the number of people who would like to receive benefits.

We should consolidate the current 75 federal welfare programs into block grants to be operated by the states. However, since the bulk of welfare funds come from the federal taxpayers, we have every right to attach conditions. The block grants to the states should come with pro-marriage, anti-illegitimacy strings attached.

The most important condition is a requirement that welfare funds cannot be used to reward or subsidize illegitimacy. Welfare reform can't stop illegitimacy, but we surely should stop paying for it. It's immoral to take taxes out of the pockets of hard-working Americans who obey the moral law, and then subsidize and reward those who don't.

For starters, we should forbid all cash welfare payments to minor girls (of course, giving them nine-months' notice). Minor girls should be eligible for welfare payments only as a minor child of a parent on welfare.

The most destructive aspect of the liberal welfare system over the last 30 years has been to offer minor girls an apartment of their own, with cash, free rent, food stamps and other subsidies, as a reward for having an illegitimate child. This perverse incentive has produced millions of fatherless children.

We should stop the current practice of giving increased payments to welfare mothers when they have additional children. Those who work for a living do not get raises from their employers when they have more children.

We should re-establish the standard that the responsibility for supporting a child rests with the father and mother, not with the taxpayers. Finally, there should be common-sense work requirements for welfare recipients, and fathers should have priority in getting whatever jobs are available.